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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: FM GUL ON NEXT STEPS WITH IRAN

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Iranian aspirations for nuclear weapons are the single most important -- and difficult -- problem facing Europe and the Middle East today, according to Turkish Foreign Minister Gul. In an April 14 meeting with visiting Congressional Staff and DCM, Gul stated emphatically that a solution to the Iranian dilemma could only be found if the international community remained firmly united. He cautioned about the intentions of Russia, India, and China and said that the Iranians would attempt to manipulate even the slightest division. However, if there is an unbroken consensus on the way forward, Gul asserted that the Iranian leadership would deem the standoff too costly and find a way to back down.

¶2. (C) Gul contrasted the situation in Iran with that of Saddam's Iraq, noting that Iran today is both more dangerous and more complex. The Iranians feel politically empowered by taking on the West and financially boosted by the high price of oil. Noting that Saddam had been an isolated despotic leader surrounded by yes men, Gul characterized the Iranian leadership as more diverse. While Ahmadinejad is a crude populist, there are many others, including Khamenei and Rafsanjani, who are more sophisticated and who engage in real debate and discussion. In his view, these are people who can be convinced.

¶3. (C) Gul said the international community needed to adopt a nuanced approach that would allow a way out of the dilemma without driving further extremism by the Iranian leadership. He stressed that the solution could be found in diplomatic means and that Turkey was ready to contribute fully. In response to DCM's query about steps that might pressure the regime without punishing the people, such as targeted sanctions, Gul said that Turkey, the U.S., and other states need to work together on that specific question. He said that a nuclear weapons capability would drive an irrational and exploitative policy by Iran throughout the region and the world. Noting that Turkey would be the first country to feel that exploitation, he said that Turkey is ready to play its part in finding a solution.

¶4. (C) Noting the possibility of multiple crises occurring simultaneously in the region, Gul said that stability in Iraq and some form of dialogue between the new governments in Israel and Palestine were essential, both in their own right and to ensure that the Iranians didn't manipulate those situations to suit their own ends. Moreover, if all these problems erupt at the same time, the potential for error or failure increases dramatically.

¶5. (C) Gul was more engaged and passionate on this issue than at any time in the past. Perhaps sparked by the morning headlines which featured reports of el Baradei's "failed mission" to Tehran along with continued inflationary rhetoric by Ahmadinejad, he was clearly focused and made an explicit

effort to convey a willingness to collaborate with us on the way forward. As we consider next steps, we should take up his offer and dialogue with the Turks as intensively as possible. Our views of Iran do not and probably will not coincide completely. But we must make every effort to ensure that Turkey, the only NATO ally that shares a border with Iran, is a part of the solution.

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